HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

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AN EPIDEMIC OF BLOODSHED

"The leading cause of death among black males ages 15 to 24 in the U.S. is not heart disease, not cancer, not any natural cause. It is murder by other blacks. ...More than 40% of all the nation's murder victims are black, and 94% of those who commit these murders are black."

The above is excerpted from the September 16, 1985 edition of TIME. The article, "When Brother Kills Brother," from which the passage is taken is comprised of other frightening statistics and an offering of views on and explanations of this situation by various persons. In addition to this TIME article, NBC recently did a news feature on "black-on-black homicides." Knowing what we do about the level of concern the Caucasian-run Establishment media generally manifest about the conditions under which African people in this country live, we should also know that the rate at which we are killing each other must have reached astounding proportions for these media to deem this development newsworthy. And if TIME finds our murdering of each other newsworthy, we ought, at the very least, find this business alarming.

In discussions about this phenomenon of African-on-African killing, one frequently hears one or both of the following theories put forth as explanations--Proximity Theory and Racial Self-Hatred. The first suggests that we, like any other group of people, when faced with our own anger and frustration, will tend to take this anger or/and frustration out on whomever is closest at hand. According to this theory, because African people in the U.S. gener-

DENNIS BRUTUS TO SPEAK IN LINCOLN

Exiled Azanian(South African) Poet Dennis Brutus will be speaking at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln on Friday morning, October 25. This appearance is planned as a part of "Peace With Justice Week"(October 19-26) sponsored by a number of groups, including Church Women United, some local Lincoln churches, and Nebraskans for Peace.

In addition, the Nebraskans For Peace Human Rights And Racial Justice Committee will be sponsoring a poetry reading on Human Rights Day, December 10. Local African poets will be featured. For further information, contact the Lincoln chapter of Nebraskans For Peace at 475-4620.

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AFRICAN POETS IN NEBRASKA VOL. II, which was to have come out this month as the special October edition of the FLAME, has been delayed until next month because we want to get submissions from more of you Brothers and Sisters who write poetry. Send submissions, along with stamped, self-addressed envelope to: African Poets in Nebraska; Harambee Flame; P.O. Box 2500;Lincoln, NE.; 68502-0500.

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ally live in all or predominantly African neighborhoods, the chances are that victims of our outbursts will be Africans. Moreover, this explanation would attribute the high level of murders of African people by other African people to the high degree of anger and frustration characterising ourselves as a group confronted with a particularly severe extent of unemployment and other conditions which function to block the fulfillment of aspirations.

The Racial Self-Hatred model postulates that the high rate at which we are killing each other is symptomatic of our hatred of ourselves as a people and that we turn this self-hatred on others whom remind us of ourselves--other "blacks."

There can be no questioning of the validity of Proximity Theory insofar as it relates to the fact that some African people in the U.S. kill each other. If a person is upset, ordinarily, he or she is not going to go out of his or her way to find someone to hurt. But while Proximity Theory may serve to explain the fact that we are killing each other, it does not adequately explain the rate at which we are doing this. According to the TIME article cited earlier, "In America today, a white female has 1 chance in 606 of becoming a murder victim. A white male has 1 chance in 186. A black female has 1 chance in 124. A black male has 1 chance in 29."

Those who subscribe to Proximity Theory might argue that African men in the U.S. are simply more violent than persons from other groups and that this tendency toward violence is fed by feelings of economic and other kinds of impotency which cause us to be highly frustrated. A picture might be drawn of an American-born African male who lives in a nation of wealth and a nation in which a man's worth is gauged by the extent to which he can "bring home the bacon." In such a picture, this man, unemployed or underemployed, is forced to question his manhood. At the same time, the man knows, and has been shown by the American commercial media in particular, that there are other ways by which his manhood might be measured--through sexual conquests and by development of a macho, tough-dude image. Thus, the African male in America, often unable, or seeing himself as being unable, to manifest manhood economically, turns to the playboy/pimp or tough dude avenue in order to prove to himself and convince others that he is a man.

As accurate a picture as the above may be, it does not take into account the special character of contempt and/or rage which often marks confrontations between bloods: "I'll kill me a nigger;" "Aint nothing a nigger can tell me;" "Black mother ..., what you want to do?" In addition, it has been noted that a large number of murders of African people in the U.S. by African people have been committed with a relatively casual indifference and over very trivial "wrongs" perpetrated by the victim. If the above are not signs of [1]racial self-hatred, what else can they be? If we need other evidence, we need only look at the degree to which American-born African men reject African women in favor of Caucasian women; our tendency to attempt to alter our African features (hair-straightening, pressing, processing, and so forth in the case of the poor and plastic surgery in the case of the more affluent) or to see our features as being ugly the less they appear to approximate Caucasian features ("Aint that nigger got some big lips"?); etc.

African-on-African violence in the U.S. is a result of a combination of forces. It is not just a matter of our being upset and taking the anger out on people close at hand. It is not simply a case of people having been programmed by American institutions to hold "blackness," or Africanness, in contempt and then manifesting that contempt in violence. Nor is it simply a matter of our men, frequently locked out of economic opportunity, acting out television macho images. It is a complex web of

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factors which has resulted in a situation in which, very simply, too many of our men are dying and too many of our men are killing them.

The complexity underlying this issue notwithstanding, we must attempt to examine, to sort through, the gauntlet of forces through which African males move in our development from childhood to "manhood." Maybe in doing so, we can find effective means of slowing down and eventually halting the collective self-genocide taking place in our communities.

What are the messages we receive during childhood? Where do those messages come from? One of the most prevalent and pervasive messages we receive is that we are inferior, as a people, to Caucasians. The primary sources of this message are the "black church," school, and television. How is the message gotten across? From the "black church" the message is sent to us in the following manner. We are taught to praise God through "his son," Jesus. Our preachers, while frequently well-versed in the teachings of divinity schools, generally have done little or no independent study of history as it relates to Jesus and other Biblical figures and as it relates to the development of Christianity. As a result, these ministers fill our heads with a Europeanized version of Christianity through which we learn to give supreme deference to Caucasians as represented by a "son of God" pictured and otherwise portrayed as Caucasian.

In primary school, we are bombarded with a vast barrage of Caucasian images while receiving only scanty information about African people and our positive contributions to world development. We are taught to pay homage to a wide array of Caucasian "heroes" and to view genuine African heroes as either veritable non-entities or either lunatics or villains. For instance, we are taught to venerate the "pioneers" for opening up American frontiers(driving the "injuns" off their native lands) while, simultaneously, being told that persons like Nat Turner and Denmark Vessey, who led revolts against slavery, were either or both mad and evil men. When African folks are presented to us as being worth emulating, they are generally "safe" persons(George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington, et al) whose lives and philosophies did/do not pose a radical challenge to the American political/economic/social way of life.

Typically, the schools give us another message: that we "black people" owe everything positive which we have become to our "civilizing" by an enlightened America. According to the "education" we receive, we have essentially nothing that could be called a history prior to our cruise on slave ships to the shores of America.

Due to the increased instance of both mothers and fathers of families working outside the home, to the more and more prevalent case of the mother working and there being no father at home, and to other factors, parents are spending less than adequate time with their children and televisions have been given the role of surrogate parent or baby-sitter. From an article by Robert Staples and Terry Jones in the May/June 1985 issue of THE BLACK SCHOLAR: "According to a recent A.C. Nielson survey, blacks watch television an average of 10% more than whites. Other Nielson Index figures indicate that by the time the average child has graduated from high school he will have viewed 15,000 hours of television. Since a good percentage of this 15,000 hours of viewing shows black people in a negatively, distorted light, it may not be unreasonable to argue that with all its promise, television serves no greater purpose than to create a false sense of superiority on the part of white people and a false sense of inferiority on the part of blacks."

What do our children see? They see wealthy Caucasians, powerful Caucasians, Caucasians with super-human powers, and

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other images of Caucasians which function to reinforce what they've already been taught by the "black church" and the school system--that "white is where it's at." When our children do see African people on the tube, they often are in the roles of criminals of various sorts, modern-day minstrels, cultural clones of Caucasians, or characters placed in situations that do not reflect what is the reality for most African people in this country.

Moreover, in the more popular television shows which portray wealth and power, that wealth and power are commonly achieved through the gun or other forms of physical force and/or intimidation or through trickery. Surely we do not think that this fact escapes our children.

By the time our children reach adolescence, if not before, they have been indoctrinated with the idea that "black people(Little in their experiences has shown them a connection between themselves and Africa)" are inferior; that men can only be men if they can "get over" materially, sexually, or through being able to push their weight around; and they have been able to see that there is a gulf between the American Dream and what, for most of them, is their reality.

A result of this web or gauntlet of forces is that we have men in our communities who have contempt for anyone with dark skin, wooly hair, thick lips, and broad noses; who feel insecure about their manhood; and who both intend to get over regardless of whom must get hurt and are in no mood to take any mess(what they interpret as a challenge to or questioning of their manhood) from anybody, particularly, "some nigger." Adding crucially to this scenario is the fact that American culture fosters individualism. This means that a person, already feeling the pinch of economic/political/social impotency, is left to feel that he has to deal with it alone. Thus, "I'm gonna git mine." What "mine" is depends on the person and the situation in which he finds himself. "Mine" may be money or reputation or image or other things of "importance." Whatever "mine" may be, too many of us are dying for it and we are obligated to take measures to bring this "joy"ride of blood-letting to a screeching halt.

--The editor

1-"Racial self-hatred" is actually a misnomer in that there is but one race among people. It is the human race. The concept of "race" is a non-scientific construction of Europeans during the trade in African slaves. These Christian "theorists" needed a conceptual basis for being able to justify the buying and selling of human beings. Through developing the idea that there were different races among humans, the step of declaring that the "black race" was an inferior one was an easy one to make and very convenient.

HACO MEETINGS

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization meets on the following dates, from now through the 22nd. of December:

Sun. Sept. 29	Tue. Oct. 8
Sun. Oct. 13	Tue. Oct. 22
Sun. Oct. 27	Tue. Nov. 5
Sun. Nov. 10	Tue. Nov. 19
Sun. Nov. 24	Tue. Dec. 3
Sun. Dec. 8	Tue. Dec. 17
Sun. Dec. 22	

We invite you to attend our meetings and would particularly welcome your involvement in our educational programs. The focus for this period is African History from Ancient Egypt Up To The Period Of European Colonialism. Let us know on which dates you wish to attend, whether or not you wish to give educational or cultural presentations related to this focus, and give us names of guests who will be accompanying you. Write to Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; Attn: Mondo; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Non-Establishment Politics

"And Berkeley, long a hotbed of student activism and a sort of sanctuary for people outside the American mainstream, now has a *mayor and city council committed to implementing more or less the opposite of Ronald Reagan's program.

"Last November, while Reagan was sweeping 49 states, this city of 103,000 voted four members of Berkeley Citizens Action(BCA) onto its council. That gave the leftist BCA an 8-1 majority, which, under the leadership of Mayor Gus Newport, is beginning to put into practice some of the ideals that Berkeley has been famous for espousing.

"While Newport has become a high-profile spokesman on national and foreign policy issues, he and the BCA-controlled council place their greatest emphasis on local nuts-and-bolts matters. It was BCA's positions on those problems that led to its victory in November, and it is the issues of housing, transportation, garbage disposal and commercial development that now occupy the progessives' energies.

"BCA won the support of a sizable segment of the affluent residents in the Berkeley hills by campaigning against massive commercial development, especially on the waterfront. Much of that prime acreage, now largely unused, will probably be set aside for open-space recreation.

"At the same time, however, Newport and his city council allies are eager to encourage business initiatives that will provide employment for Berkeley's Black population. The minority community here has not benefitted appreciably from the boom underway in the Bay Area, and census estimates in fact indicate a 20% decrease since 1980 in the number of Black people living in the city.

"That drop-off, to a Black population of around 23%, was caused mostly by the closing of a Colgate-Palmolive plant here that employed many minority workers. Soaring housing costs have played an important part in Berkeley's gentrification too, as lower-income homeowners in the south and west of the city sell out to white newcomers. Some tenants have been displaced as well, despite passage a few years ago of a fairly strong rent control measure.

"The council has tried to address this central problem in a variety of ways. It has set up an economic development office, locating some of its services in a shut-down bank building that was taken over by the city. In addition to promoting job-creation investments in south and west Berkeley, this office will be involved in efforts to secure a fixed percentage of Berkeley-based jobs for Berkeley residents.

"An interim ordinance establishing commercial rent control in one section of the city was also enacted recently. That measure, which may eventually be extended to cover all of Berkeley, is intended to protect smaller, longtime merchants from the onslaught of chain stores and pricey specialty shops."

*Mayor Gus Newport, an African, was elected in 1979

--Excerpted from an article, "Berkeley: A 'Zone of Control'," which appears in the October 2 edition of THE GUARDIAN

South African Incursions

"On September 16, the apartheid regime invaded Angola for the second time in two months. A few days after this invasion was launched, South African Foreign Minister Roelof Botha revealed that South Africa has continued to supply military and economic aid to the pro-U.S. antigovernment forces in ambique in clear violation of

mati Accords signed one and a half years ago. These military actions have been complemented by the regime's continued threats of economic punishment against other countries in southern Africa.

"These developments are not totally separate from the internal upheaval in South Africa and the maneuvers of the regime and the U.S. to put a lid on the turmoil.

"The South Africans claim to have invaded Angola in order to 'preempt' a major raid on the northern border region of Namibia by the South West African Peoples Organization(SWAPO), whose guerrilla forces are based in Angola.

"The claim that the raid was aimed mainly against SWAPO was undercut by both the number of times that this particular story has been used to justify South African military actions in Angola in the past and by the apartheid regime's announcement during its last foray into Angola, back in July, that it had totally decimated SWAPO'S guerrilla forces. More serious cracks in the cover story began to appear when it was revealed that the South African troops had not been deployed in Southwestern Angola, where most SWAPO forces are supposedly based, but instead had moved immediately towards central and northeastern Angola and in a few days had reached points up to 150 miles into Angola. This brought the South African troops in a position to directly lend some much-needed air and ground support to the forces of the U.S.- and South African-sponsored UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi."

--Excerpted from an article, "South Africa's Preemptive Strikes," which appears in the October 1 edition of REVOLUTIONARY WORKER.

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Crime & Imprisonment In The U.S.

"America is both one of the most crime-ridden of the industrialized nations and one of the most punitive. Each of us is roughly 7 to 10 times more likely to be murdered than a European or a Japanese; American males are 15 times more likely to die of criminal violence than Swiss or English men, and over 20 times more likely than their Danish counterparts. Yet we lock up more people and for longer times than any other advanced nation. In low-crime Holland the average maximum sentence for robbery is 19 months, compared with 150 months in U.S. federal prisons. Of the world's industrially comparable nations, only the Soviet Union and South Africa have a higher proportion of their citizens behind bars --and many of them can be assumed to be political prisoners, rather than 'common criminals.'

"Within the United States, there is no evidence that getting tough cuts crime. In fact, the reverse seems to be true. Today there are more than twice as many Americans in prison as there were in 1970, though for most of the last decade and a half, crime rates have risen(and despite a recent slight drop in overall crime, the rate of violent urban crime continues to rise).

"About a fourth of all urban males(and half of all black men) will be arrested at some point in their lives for a serious crime like robbery, arson, rape, or murder."

--Excerpted from "Why The Crime Stoppers Can't," a book review in the Nov./Dec. issue of MOTHER JONES

We welcome your comments; criticisms; contributions of essays, poems, announcements; etc.

Editor/Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa
(aka David L. Rice)
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